

Dear Pat

Thanks for your long and thoughtful reply and for all the efforts you have made, especially on getting the older literature on line. I read your reply just before the editor of Nature, Philip Campbell, came to talk to me this AM, and so I broached the subject with him. He and I agreed that the fraction of the publisher's revenue that comes after the initial publication was what was at stake and that this must be small. He told me that he would raise your proposal w MacMillan and their German owners and try to find out for me what fraction of their income from Nature comes in permissions and other things that would lie outside the 6 month trial.

If this were <5%, one could argue that this is an example where the Internet both gives (higher profit on online only subscriptions) and takes away (loss of profit on long term rights). If it were higher, some negotiation would be worthwhile. Campbell gave me one interesting peice of information: Elsevier try to make a 40% profit on their journals. He said the aim of Macmillan was "much" lower.

My worry remains that if strong unions can crumble during strikes, its hard to imagine our substantially less collective community holding together if the most prestigious journals stay in line. You can imagine how students and post-docs will push advisors. I asked the folks in my lab and at least one was not wild about the idea of forsaking their paper's appearance in the holy trinity. People in baseball and football still remember who crossed the lines in their strikes!

My worries relate directly to this sentence: "My strong belief is that many journals, including most society journals as well as Science, will soon agree to the policies we are proposing." Do you mean before or after you publish the letter?

If you mean before (as a result of negotiation), I think you will start from a position of strength in dealing with the remaining journals. If after, much will depend on the relative strengths of the two sides, which is what makes me such a strong proponent of going to journals one at a time with a list of signatories and trying to talk nicely to them. My experience with colleagues, students, post-docs, and my own little daughter has almost always been that carrot works better than stick and carrot with the implied future alternative of stick often works best of all. If it were possible to get Nature and Science on board before the letter appears in public, my guess is that everything would be very smooth sailing, and I will try contacting the Senior Editor at Science to see what their position is. Even if you've already tried someone there, going through another channel may help.

All that said, I'm very happy to sign on to the letter, would be happy to help in negotiations in any way that I can, and if all else fails will man the barricades and stand at them to the very end.

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PS I tried calling. If you tried 617-496-1381 it shouldn't have been a fax number. Note the 6, since all Harvard #s used to start w a 5!

Andrew Murray

Patrick O. Brown, 10/24/00 11:15 PM -0700, When we run out of cobblestones, we'll thro

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